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Senators approves tougher penalties for methamphetamine producers

LANSING — Fines and penalties in Michigan will increase for people who participate in the production of methamphetamine under a package of seven bills passed Wednesday in the Senate.

“People who produce meth often steal anhydrous ammonia and transport it in improper containers such as propane tanks,” said Sen. Ron Jelinek (R-Three Oaks), a bill sponsor. “This is dangerous to the public’s health and safety since it becomes a toxic gas when released into the environment and can cause serious injury to emergency responders, law enforcement and innocent passers-by.”

Methamphetamine is a growing concern throughout Michigan with clandestine labs being found in rural and city areas, barns, garages, apartments, storage areas and vehicles. The production of methamphetamine can cause serious environmental risks since the toxic waste produced is often dumped in public sewer systems or directly on the ground.

In addition, production of meth can result in fires or explosions, injuring or killing law enforcement agents and fire personnel who respond to the scene of a meth lab.

The package of bills includes provisions that:

- Prohibit the possession of more than 12 grams of pseudoephedrine (with the exception of pediatric products), a chemical used in the production of methamphetamine;
- Increase to 20 years imprisonment the maximum penalty for those owning or possessing the places, chemicals or equipment used in production of the illegal stimulant;
- Create a new crime with a maximum penalty of four years imprisonment for people who transport anhydrous ammonia in unapproved containers;
- Require inspection of property used as a clandestine lab for the production of methamphetamine to determine if there is contamination, and require public warnings if any is discovered.

Senate Bills 648-652, 698 and 777 now go to the House for consideration.